

## Star Wars

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#### The Darkstaff

Scenario Supplement for Recursion

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What terrible evil lurks at the heart of the Cularin system? The recent discovery of Darth Rivan's journals cast light on a dangerous object known as the darkstaff. This latest supplement to the Living Force campaign ties into the August scenario, Recursion, the third part of the "Belted In" trilogy. Warning: This article contains substantial spoilers for the Living Force scenario "Philology."

For several years, Cularin was gone, leaving an emptiness where planets and moons once orbited two suns that also disappeared. From outside the system, nothing was known of what might have occurred. One moment, Cularin was present. The next, it was not.

Some of the heroes of Cularin, though, saw what precipitated the disappearance. They saw Len Markus remove something from the asteroid belt. They saw the creatures that live in the shadows of the Belt. They saw glimpses of what might have been, and central to it all was a black rod a meter long - something Len's datapad referred to as "the darkstaff."

Little was known about the darkstaff until recently, when a team of Jedi researchers made their way once more into the bowels of the Sith fortress beneath Almas and emerged with a pair of ancient books. These tomes, believed to be remnants of Darth Rivan's personal journals, have been turned over to the Jedi Council. What follows is an excerpt of one of the few sections that has been made publicly accessible through the HoloNet.

One must wonder: If this is what the Jedi believe the galaxy is prepared to know, what else might be hidden in the tomes?

The natives - - if one can call them that, since I've seen their kind elsewhere in the galaxy, though they are one of the few species I've run across who have managed to actually lose the capacity for hyperspace travel - - are tolerable enough. They have their planet, and they don't leave it. They can't, having eschewed even the technology that would allow them to move beyond the peaks of those pathetic rock piles they call "mountains." I go to that world sometimes to see what they are doing, and to see if they have any recollection of what brought them here. They don't know. It was a drawing for them, and they arrived, and they believed it to be their own will that brought them here, that trapped them in this backwater of the galaxy.

There is much to be said for backwaters, though. I myself often find comfort in visiting places others avoid. More often than not, there is a cool darkness awaiting, a moistness like the air after a rain shower beneath a moonlit sky. The typical individual finds such darkness uncomfortable. Uninviting. Dangerous.

That is because they do not understand.

Darkness is a friend, an ally. Darkness allows us to understand others, to see what they value when they believe no one else is looking. It allows us to be honest with ourselves, to express those values that we would disavow in the light. The light blinds us. It is only in the dark that we see clearly, and there is a great dark hidden among these worlds.

I had thought that the darkness would be here, beneath the frozen sands. Cold frightens the foolish just as certainly as dark, and the two go together. But as the world begins to thaw, as the kaluthin finally take root, I am finding that there is no more darkness here than that which I find wherever I go. This world has never known life at more than a microscopic level. That can change. This world has never known progress that did not involve the shifting of sands as the winds whipped up and the planet slowly spun on its axis. That, too, can change.

I like the dark and the cold. I like that the suns are so far away. I like that there is something nearby -- not on this planet, but in this system -- that drew those creatures here, and that even now, continues to call out to me.

I do not want it for myself. I want to destroy it. "Belted In" Trilogy Summary Nirama, the enigmatic alien crime lord, has an agenda -- a very public agenda. He's not happy about recent goings-on in Cularin, and he's less happy with the strangeness in the asteroid belt that he calls "home." Is Nirama helping the people of Cularin, are the people helping him, or is it actually mutual?

I could not wield it. I would not. It would not make me more powerful; it would destroy me. And so, I want it gone, erased from the galaxy. Nothing that has the power to destroy me should be allowed to continue to exist, no matter how sweet the promises it makes, no matter how dark the night would be if I held it. It must be destroyed.

The dreams trouble me, if only somewhat. I see the thing (which I have taken to calling the "darkstaff," though it scarcely qualifies as a staff, since I imagine such things as being nearly as long as I am tall) not as an object, but as an absence. It is an emptiness, a slice of the universe where there is no light and no heat, but also no cold and no dark. Light moves around it but does not come into its grasp. It doesn't want the light. It wants the Force.

That is what makes this darkstaff so insidious. If it were a tool, something I could use to harness the Force to my own ends, to demonstrate the reality of pain and suffering to the remainder of the galaxy, I might want to wield it. There are still times that I think, "Yes, I could take it and use it against everyone else. I could use it to drain the Force from their bodies, to watch them crumble to dust as their essence evaporated." But I know such

thoughts are not my own. They are the darkstaff's thoughts. It would use me to drain others, and then it would drain me.

It pulled me here. It will pull more of us here. But I will do what none of them have the wisdom to do. I, who know what I face, will build on this world a defense, a means of ensuring that this object cannot ever be taken from this system.

I've been working with a holocron, trying to pull up anything that might allow me to better understand the darkstaff. I now believe it was created by one of my forebears, though the generations that have passed since its creation I cannot count. I also have trouble fathoming why the thing would have ever been made, and I have come to conclude that it was an accident, a byproduct of some strange experiment that could not be undone - - and that ultimately was the undoing of its creator.

The Force is our tool, after all. It is what makes us powerful, what allows us to stand above those who would put us down. An object that feeds upon the Force - - which may, in fact, store the Force within it, for whatever purposes it might ultimately have - - is antithetical to our existence, and any of us who created such a thing would surely have wanted it destroyed. Yet it exists, and any record of its creator is long gone.

I've not seen it physically, but I know what it looks like. One meter in length and perhaps four centimeters in diameter, it sucks at the light just as it sucks at the Force. It wants energy, power. It wants to destroy. It wants to end lives. It wants - - and that, by itself, is the most disturbing aspect, the reason that I fear it and desire it and seek to destroy it.

The thing wants.

Ambition is dangerous enough in a living creature. In an object, a creation with nothing to lose, it can be catastrophic.

Part of the darkness in this system is the afterimage of a scream. It's comforting. Most places, you cannot feel death. Here, it is part of the very fabric of existence. Something truly horrible, wretched beyond words, happened. That is what keeps the fearful far from here, and what draws the curious in.

That scream came from the last time the darkstaff surged. It was held and given power, and then asked to provide something in return. It did. It provided death.

I respect that. But I will not serve a tool that seeks my demise, that wants my power. I will build defenses, and when I am ready, I will go to the darkness and bring it to the wretched light.

I must. If I am to live forever, there is no other way.